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CIVIL WARS IN SOUTH AMERICA.

BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE ARGENTINE MINISTER AT WASHINGTON,
ESTANISLAO S. ZEBALLOS.

THE prominent men of South America are always eager to know more about the United States, to study the development of its civilization, which has unfolded so rapidly and assumed such extraordinary proportions, and they have always been anxious to assist in its constitutional growth. Much of this has been the necessary sequence of their political education, and the interest felt has naturally been greatest in those republics where the federal system of government has been adopted, a method created by American constituencies. The experience gained and questions solved by the United States; the words of wisdom which have fallen from the lips of its great statesmen, such as Hamilton, Madison, and Jay; the profound learning evinced by such jurists as Marshall, Story, and Cooley; the discourses of Clay and Webster, and the messages and speeches of its great Presidents, became the fountains of political knowledge at which the South American nations drank deeply; this knowledge they had to analyze; and its results, for want of traditions of their own, they followed in the building of their own free institutions.

When a South American lands at the port of New York or San Francisco for the first time, he comes with his mind filled with pleasing illusions, like a man who approaches a dear old homestead, around the hearthstone of which his ancestors gathered. He feels that there really exists a strong political and social tie between this great Republic and those of Spanish America, amounting to a sort of political relationship. The Congresses and Pan-American gatherings during the past ten years have also contributed in a great degree to strengthen this sentiment and the natural impressions of such a traveller. From the

very beginning of his residence in this country he in fact tastes the pleasure and enjoys the pleasing impressions which a cordial welcome by the press and a warm social reception unite in producing. It is this feeling, arising from the spontaneous hospitality and frankness shown toward strangers and the social facilities extended to distinguished persons in the United States, which is such a delightful peculiarity of the national character, that carries away the European and enchants the Spanish American.

It may, however, be remarked that these demonstrations grow more out of a desire to get nearer to the Spanish-American peoples and to know them better than out of any just appreciation of their economic, political, or social conditions. It is always a source of great surprise to the traveller in the United States to find that the other nations of the New World are not so well known there as they are in Europe. The press is somewhat better informed than the community at large, but the exigencies of modern journalism are such that whatever it may publish daily is necessarily of the briefest and most cursory nature, being confined to occasional accounts of sensational and extraordinary occurrences. The social and political circles are not so well acquainted with their neighbors. Some of these groups scarcely know the very names of a few of the Spanish-American countries, and their ideas about them are as vague and confused as if they concerned regions hardly yet settled or even explored, hidden in the depths of trackless forests or beyond distant seas.

I have experienced these impressions. Now and then I have met in this country ladies and gentlemen who could discuss the Argentine Republic with the same well-informed exactness with which they spoke of affairs in the States of New York or Illinois ; but these are rather cases indicating unusual curiosity on the part of individuals. My country is certainly not one of the least interesting upon the immense Southern Continent, and yet the greater part of my good friends in the United States have honored me with numberless inquiries about its political and physical geography and concerning its habits and customs. Sometimes articles have appeared in reviews and magazines, and even books have been published, with some pretence of furnishing new and correct information, but they have generally been so filled with mistakes and such a jumble of the real facts as to do injustice to these republics in South America. All this shows the meagre results that

have thus far been accomplished in the political, social, or literary circles of this country by the various Pan-American congresses that have been held, the numerous celebrations and reciprocal official courtesies exchanged, as well as by the work of the "Bureau of the American Republics." But such results have been attained in other circles and sometimes of the most satisfactory character. The merchants have eagerly seized the offered advantages, and their commercial intercourse with the countries of the New World has increased from month to month to much mutual profit.

The reasons for this lack of information in these political, social, and literary circles, concerning the sister countries of the three Americas having a Latin origin, appear to me to spring largely from three facts. One of these is the deficient teaching of Spanish-American geography in the schools of this country.

In the Argentine Republic, a child coming from a graded school can give a clear and full idea, not only of the United States as a nation, but also of its various States. There is probably not a similar American school where the like would be found to exist in reference to the Latin Republics. Still the fact that, in comparison with the Northern Colossus of the present epoch, they are but small nations, does not diminish the interest that should be felt in studying them ; and this sentiment should be greater among the people of the United States because they are vitally interested in opening for the products of their industries the rich markets, capable of an enormous consumption, which the commerce of Europe has hitherto monopolized and spent so much to retain.

The second reason that occurs to me is the lack of good, rapid, and cheap means of communication, so that the thousands of American travelers are not attracted southward, but, eager for instruction and diversion, rush to the numerous resorts in the central and western regions of their own country, and swarm across the Atlantic to the Old World in increasing numbers yearly. The very few, however, who have visited these southern lands have come back enchanted with their experiences.

The third reason may be laid at the door of these very Spanish-American countries, for they have scarcely done anything to make themselves better known, and the result is that even to this time it is almost impossible to find in the English language any

sensible general information about them, except possibly some monotonous and humdrum literature, not always complete or likely to induce immigration. No matter therefore how eagerly the information might be sought, there has been very little wherewith to satisfy the craving. My experience in this special matter has been a very trying one and very complete in its way, for the Legation under my charge has been daily besought by intelligent inquiries for interesting information regarding the literature, science, and social economics of the Argentine Republic, as well as the more commonplace data for mere business purposes.

The approach to each other of the different sections of the New World proceeds but slowly. The Spanish-American countries have no marine, nor have they sufficient capital to cultivate more intimate relations with foreign peoples. In the United States the shipping interests have been allowed to decay, while capital and energy have been concentrated upon domestic enterprises and internal improvements, leaving the business enterprises of Europe and its commercial marine to almost entirely control the fertile fields of Spanish-America. This singular insulation has seemed to me worthy of special notice on my part at this time; it is a condition of things that will soon disappear when all the countries of the New World, having easy and frequent communication, will be bound by neighborly ties; because when understood it will dispel the mistaken ideas concerning South American revolutions which are held in the United States, and correct the sentiments of compassion, not unfrequently mingled with contempt, with which the citizens of this republic regard those countries most agitated by domestic disturbances.

The civil wars which have occurred in South America cannot be understood in the United States, nor the causes leading to them be explained, except by an intimate acquaintance with the social structure and conditions of each particular country. Nor is the surprise unnatural which is occasioned here by the prolonged condition of anarchy resulting from some of those internecine struggles, but it is explained by the forgetfulness of the organic conditions under which those republics were formed. These revolutions are not the work of one man, although they always follow a personal leadership. The despots and the revolutionists are equally the product of an organic internal condition.

The States of the American Union were founded by enlightened people, comprising among their number many religious enthusiasts and missionaries, versed in matters of government. They brought with them as the basis of their colonies a moral capacity, habits of esteem and obedience for the regulations laid down for the government of civil society, as well as the traditional regard for justice and respect for law upon which rests the civilization of England. From such seeds there sprang a like country. The United States, comparatively near to Europe, thus received from its most advanced centres the basis of its population, which exterminated the native Indian, or isolated him in the western solitudes, without any admixture of blood except in very rare instances. The Spanish-American countries, on the other hand, were founded by military men of the Middle Ages, who came from southern Europe when the feudal system was imperative, and at a time when ideas were neither clear nor well-settled concerning the civil and political principles which served for the government of all civilized lands. Besides, the soldier element, everywhere and at all times imprudent and venturesome, did not receive the support of European emigration.

The enormous distances and the barbarism of the new regions impeded the natural current of settlers which began to flow from the Old World, reducing the colonizing expeditions mainly to soldiers and camp followers. One of the most numerous of these, which started for the immense region lying below the tenth degree of south latitude on the continent of South America, did not exceed two thousand persons. These troops soon succumbed to the unaccustomed climate, perished with want and by the hands of their savage enemies, so that the early European colonies, the nuclei around which settlements and civilization gathered, were constantly decreasing in numbers.

In order to maintain the conquest and continue the spread of civilization, the Sovereigns of Spain and of Portugal initiated a new and wise policy, which had for its purpose the peaceful subjection of the indigenous element and its mixture with the colonists coming from Europe. Thus there was provided, as a basis upon which the national structures were to be erected, proceeding from these colonies, a new race of creoles in which the native element preponderated by the number of its individuals and families and even in the proportion of blood.

The native traditions of either unconditional submission and obedience to the Chief, or of implacable rebellion against him in case of a revolt, were the only rules of hereditary political science which the new social communities had for their guidance. An infusion of the blood of the warrior element of European feudalism, sometimes rebellious against its king and at others patient unto death, instead of ameliorating, only accentuated the effects of the law of social heredity in Spanish America. These new social organisms had therefore as the basic principle of their political government this fatal formula:—*despotism*, that is to say, absolute submission to the chief in power, or *revolution* by those who resisted the tyranny of the despot either because they were eager to substitute something else for it or because they could no longer endure its burden.

The brutal and ignorant masses were thus divided into two parties. Both depended upon force, by habit and tradition, and the results arrived at were in truth not likely to be solutions based upon right principles, order, or justice. These ignorant and passionate masses needed to be directed, and thus there arose among them certain leaders and commanders. Like the caciques, or chieftains among the Indians, they founded their authority upon force, upon their cunning and the terror which they inspired, or else they secured adherents by their generosity and by the shelter of the weak; thus in various ways satisfying the savage or timid instincts that swayed the passions of the uncivilized hordes of which the body politic was mainly composed. The sociologic evolution, from the tragic rebellions against Pizarro in Peru down to the recent revolution in Brazil, furnishes us with materials to formulate this law—that public order in Latin America is secure in direct ratio to the progress of education among the masses, and the extent of the European immigration, which counterbalances them.

The Brazilian revolution, in fact, began some three years ago by uprisings among the “cowboys” along the Rio Grande. The “cowboys” are a headstrong and a warlike class, whose ideas of right are sometimes confused by their confidence in the arms they always carry and influenced by stout hearts constantly habituated to danger. Their enthusiastic temperaments are naturally susceptible of being inflamed by that one among their leaders who seems most inclined to respect their arrogant and selfish life, and they are disposed to rebel against laws passed at a remote capital,

when such laws molest or interfere with their freedom or caprices. They started a revolt, but in the more advanced portion of Brazil, through the central regions where San Pablo is the metropolis and where the benefits of a university have been felt, as well as along the Southern littoral having Rio de Janeiro as a focal point, and in the North, where Bahia and Pernambuco take the lead, there was no response to the movement. The revolt of the naval squadron, which carried into the ranks of the insurgents some very prominent and respectable officers and followers, was accidental and does not conflict with the principle suggested. A bitter rivalry had broken out between the naval forces and the army, and there was much passionate folly, which the Brazilian capital contemplated coldly and with some contempt, refusing to take the part of the former.

In other South American countries public order is more solidly established, and much more so than is generally believed in the United States. Of this Chile is an example. Its terrible revolution in 1891 was an abnormal and extraordinary uprising, which assumed the form of an organic question, that of a conflict between the Congress and the executive power, complicated by bitter social antagonisms of traditional character. Now all is serene, and if the government of Chile continues to pursue the policy of prudence and toleration, which has permitted many places in the Congress to be filled by those who were defeated in the field of battle, conquerors now through the ballot, the most remote fears of disturbance will disappear and Chile will be able to continue its wise and patriotic evolution, educating its masses, extending its governing class, traditionally limited, with the best elements rising from the ranks of the people, under the redemptive influence of the schools and the universities.

The periods of peace which have been enjoyed by the other South American countries have been each time of longer duration, and these intervals have permitted the growth of a conservative sentiment as well as the culture of the body of the people. If the political situation of all of these nations does not allow the exercise of that freedom which could be wished, it is because the number of competent electors is less than the number of those who are unprepared to exercise the privilege which the law of universal suffrage has bestowed upon them, and who are dragged along by

fear, by gratitude, or by the influence of money, those efficacious means of dealing with the vote and even the life of the Indian and the ignoramus. But the time has come when, even in those countries least regularly governed, those abominable tyrannies no longer exist which have been the shame of the New World.

On the other hand, it is not always that the events which transpire in Spanish America are appreciated at their real value. It constantly happens that mere police affrays or electoral disputes are described abroad as "revolutions." This word has been used and abused until it has become meaningless. In the Argentine Republic, for example, the time for revolutions has gone by. We have too much wheat and corn to plant and harvest, for revolutionists to prosper. Nevertheless, my native land has the reputation in Europe, and even here in this country, of being a republic in revolt and incapable of self-government. The statistics of its moral and material prosperity prove the contrary. From 1869 to 1893 its population had increased from 1,800,000 inhabitants to 5,120,000. The amount of European capital invested in it, principally English, French, German, and Italian, always foresighted and well informed, exceeded eight hundred and thirty-six millions of dollars, in gold. Its common public schools, established and conducted like those of Massachusetts, with many teachers from that State and from Michigan, for thirty years past, have buildings which are actually palaces, and some of them cannot be rivalled by those of any other country in the world. Eighty photographs of these schools full of scholars were exhibited recently in Washington to many distinguished people, and they were greeted with expressions of astonishment and admiration. "They are royal palaces," they said to me; and yet in them we are now educating under compulsory laws more than three hundred thousand children of both sexes, who will form part of the sovereign people of our future.

Our national revenues increased in 1893 to \$124,000,000 currency, and all the contracts affecting our foreign debt of \$400,000,000 were fully complied with.

Such evidences of progress and such proofs of vitality certainly do not correspond with reports that my country is ungovernable and in a condition of anarchy. We have not yet attained the height of perfection. In a country organized under the federal system there is always more or less disturbance of the moral

equilibrium, for all the States have not reached the same advancement in their political education, or do not possess the same united governing class moved by disinterested and patriotic motives. In some of our States the number of unfit electors still predominates, while in others, more advanced, the irreconcilable ambitions of the ruling and cultured classes keep them so divided that they have lost their power, and are defeated by disciplined minorities though less competent for the exercise of the power of government. These anomalies, complicated by the ardent character of the people, result in electoral campaigns of the most excited character and in party strifes which are described as "revolutions," without reason and to the great damage of the country.

It is true that the Argentine people, originally composed of warlike and heroic herders of cattle, have wasted torrents of blood in revolutions and national wars; but they are now an industrious, active, and hardworking people, providing, after the United States, the favorite field for European investments and emigration. They have a capital of 600,000 cultivated inhabitants; a rich and most advanced system of public instruction; and a policy of conciliation in the conduct of their domestic affairs and of peace by means of arbitration in international matters; they afford conclusive proofs of an assured progress. The transformation has been as complete as it has been rapid.

Such are the fruits of forty years of constant and energetic labor for the instruction of the masses. Popular education has been the safeguard of the Argentine nationality, and it is to-day the immutable basis of its independence. This teaching has permitted the reception of the honest immigrant like a brother and European capital as a benefaction, our people being unmindful of ancient racial hatreds, disregarding religious antagonisms, and without jealousies or native superstitions. Education, European immigration, and the wealth gathered by a combination of capital with the strong arms of a people upon their fertile soil, will save and vindicate the name of South America when all the States that struggle for this end, and endeavor to correct the evils of the past, shall have secured the transformation in their organic structures which is energetically being accomplished by the Argentine Republic.

ESTANISLAO S. ZEBALLOS.